

ABOUT SOME ASPECTS OF THE PROTECTION OF CAVES AS A PART OF THE CULTURAL HERIRAGE IN BULGARIA

CERTAINS ASPECTS DE LA PROTECTION DES GROTTES COMME ÉLÉMENT DE L'HÉRITAGE CULTUREL DE BULGARIE

Magdalena STAMENOVA (1) & Alexey ZHALOV (2)

(1) BFSp - Speleo Club "Helictite", 75, "V.Levski" Blvd., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria,
m_stamenova65@yahoo.co.uk

(2)BFSp - Speleo Club "Helictite", 75, "V.Levski" Blvd., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria, alex@speleo-bg.com

Abstract

The article resumes in short some aspects of the statute and present situation of caves and karst objects in Bulgaria, known not only as natural phenomena, but also as archaeological sites - a valuable part of the national natural and cultural heritage.

Key words: caves, protection, cultural heritage

Résumé

Cet article passe en brève revue certains aspects du statut et de la situation actuelle des grottes et des objets karstiques en Bulgarie, étant en même temps des phénomènes naturels, mais aussi des sites archéologiques – domaine important de notre héritage national naturel et culturel.

Mots-clès: grottes, protection, heritage, culturel, Bulgarie

1. Introduction

A notorious fact is that the karst as a phenomenon with unique characteristics contains deposits not only of natural sciences' interest, but also cultural remains from the remote past. In general, these finds (usually situated in undisturbed chronological order) are better preserved in the caves, than in the open area sites.

The Bulgarian lands appear to be a contact region of cultural interactions for thousands years. Consequently, a long cultural continuity is typical for most archaeological sites in the region. The caves are not an exception to this rule.

Ironically, the caves, which preserved up to now the traces of human culture from the remote past, are mostly exposed to damage and destruction due to unrestricted and unmeasured human activity. Non-professional, treasure hunting diggings make impossible the correct defining of the finds and carrying out proper scientific exploration of any kind, which consequently leads to irrevocable loss of information and destruction of caves. This fact is well understood even at the dawn of caves' exploration, protection and socialization in Bulgaria, which dates back from the beginning of 20 c. At that time is developed the study, protection and popularization of the cultural and natural heritage in general, validated with the relative normative acts, accepted in the early years of the present Bulgarian state - a sign for the high level of culture and self-consciousness of the society.

One of the first researchers of the caves in Bulgaria stressing on their cultural and historical importance is Rafail Popov, who dedicates much of his efforts for presentation of the caves to the general public. In 1935-1940 he works over

the idea to establish people's parks in karst regions near Madara, Tarnovo and Drianovo (North-East and Central Bulgaria), where the caves can be presented as valuable natural and cultural phenomena. His activity appears to show some future trends in protection and presentation of the past in its natural context and strengthening of the relation between culture and tourism (established almost a half century later in UNESCO Conventions - 1972 and 1998) STAMENOVA (2001).

2. Bulgarian legislation and the protection of the caves

In the course of time the legislation of protection of cultural and historical heritage, including caves, is developed and specialized under a number of normative acts, but until today they do not relate to the caves as a basic object of protection.

There are several present acts, which relate in certain degree to the caves as objects of natural and cultural importance under protection of the state.

The present Constitution of Republic of Bulgaria (1991) states that the national parks, natural and archaeological reserves are exclusive state property and one of the general obligations of the state is to protect the national historical and cultural heritage (art. 18, 23). The caves, which are located in reserves, are also under such highest degree of protection.

The Act of the Monuments of Culture and Museums (1969) defines that a "monument of culture is every immovable and movable authentic material evidence for human presence and activity and for the processes in nature, which has scientific and/or cultural value and obtains social

importance" (art. 3). The monuments of culture are under state protection (art. 2). The level of protection is graded in descending order, according to the importance of the monuments of culture, defined as monuments having world, national, regional, etc. importance statute (art. 19). Here the caves, declared as immovable monuments of culture are also presented.

The Regulations No 17 of defining of the borders and protection regime of immovable monuments of culture not declared as reserves according to the above mentioned law (No 17, 1979) and the one of declaring of immovable monuments of culture (No 5, 1998) determine such monuments, its surrounding territory, period of dating, single or grouped objects and their statute of importance (world, national, etc.) as protected natural sites and monuments.

It is necessary to mention the Regulations of carrying out terrain archaeological studies in Bulgaria (1997), which provide the rules and mechanisms for archaeological researches in the country, including caves. Such studies can be undertaken only with the permission of Archaeological Institute and Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Another law, related to the caves' protection is the Act of protected territories (1998), directed mainly on protection of nature as national and human treasure (art. 2). There are several categories of protected sites and areas – reserve, national park, natural landmark, protected area, etc. including the relative necessary area, which is also protected (art. 5). For example the number of the caves in category natural landmarks are 123. (Fig.3)

According to the Bulgarian legislation, every citizen, public or state organization by following certain procedures can make an argument proposition for declaring of natural sites (caves or regions) as protected territories to the competent organs (in the regional inspections of Ministry of Environment and waters (MOEW). There is a possibility for temporary restriction of the using of separate caves. While the restrictive regime lasts, every act of its disturbing is seen as a damage of protected area ZHALOV (2006).

The legislation in Bulgaria provides also punishments for violation of protected areas and object. For instance, the Penalty Code (1968) enacts probation, prison up to 3 years or a fine (up to 2000 leva~1000 Euro) for destruction of protected areas, flora and fauna species, including caves (art. 278c).

The protection of cultural importance' objects, including caves is put into practice by the responsible institutions like the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of environment and waters. In cases of committed crime violations against protected objects, are engaged also law-enforcement institutions like the Ministry of Interior.

Today in the Main Card Index of Bulgarian Caves of Bulgarian Federation of Speleology are registered 5390 explored and mapped caves.

The total number of protected Bulgarian caves (according to any law) is over 1000 (almost 1/5 of the explored caves in the country. Here are included protected and karst objects like gorges, springs, archaeological monuments, habitats of animal species in the karst ecosystems. Many of them are protected also as monuments of culture. For instance, the number of caves, declared as monuments of culture of national importance is 138. Among them are Devetashka cave, Lovetch region (Fig.1); rock cut churches and hermitages near vill. Ivanovo, Rousse region (included in the UNESCO list of the world cultural and

historic heritage); 32 caves with graffiti (dated from Neolithic to Mediaeval ages) in the place Govedarnika, near vill. Tzarevetz, Vratza region; 28 caves located in the natural-archaeological reserve Yailata near vill. Kamen Briag, Dobrich region; 13 caves in area of archaeological-historical reserve "Sborjanovo", Razgrad region and 7 caves in Kaliakra reserve, Varna District, Magura Cave, Rabisha vill., Vidin Distr. with its monochrome guano paintings (Fig.2)



Fig.1 The Devetashka Cave – human stage from upper Palaeolith till Roman period

3. Some problems

Many problems of caves' protection appear nowadays, due to different reasons, like the imperfections of the current legislation. The present acts guarantee (often only in theory) the protection only of areas, declared as protected. In practice, all caves-natural landmarks and these in protected areas and natural parks, are protected only by putting table signs.

Different from the practice in some other countries, in Bulgaria the visits in protected caves-natural landmarks are free and out of strict control. This often causes serious (and unpunished) violations in the underground eco-system – breaking of cave formations, scratching on the walls, pollution etc. (Typical examples are Temnata dupka near Lakatnik and Duhlata near Bosnek, North-West Bulgaria).

In addition all non-protected caves are exposed to continuous and destructive (and unpunished) human activity.



Fig.2 Famous monochrome guano paintings of Magura Cave (Chalcolith – Bronze age)

Having in mind that the caves are specific and unique objects, 9 members of Bulgarian Federation of Speleology worked over a Draft for the Act of the Caves, put forward to the Bulgarian Parliament in 2005. The law aims to regulate the exploration, protection and using the caves as indivisible

part of the natural and universal human treasure and as objects of special importance for geology, biological diversity, water supply, cultural and historic heritage, the science and tourism (art. 2). Here is stated the protection of the caves as object of the cultural and historic heritage, such

as rock monasteries, used and transformed by the man caves, and other objects of cultural and historic importance, including different categories of caves and the regime of protection (art. 3, 4, 5).

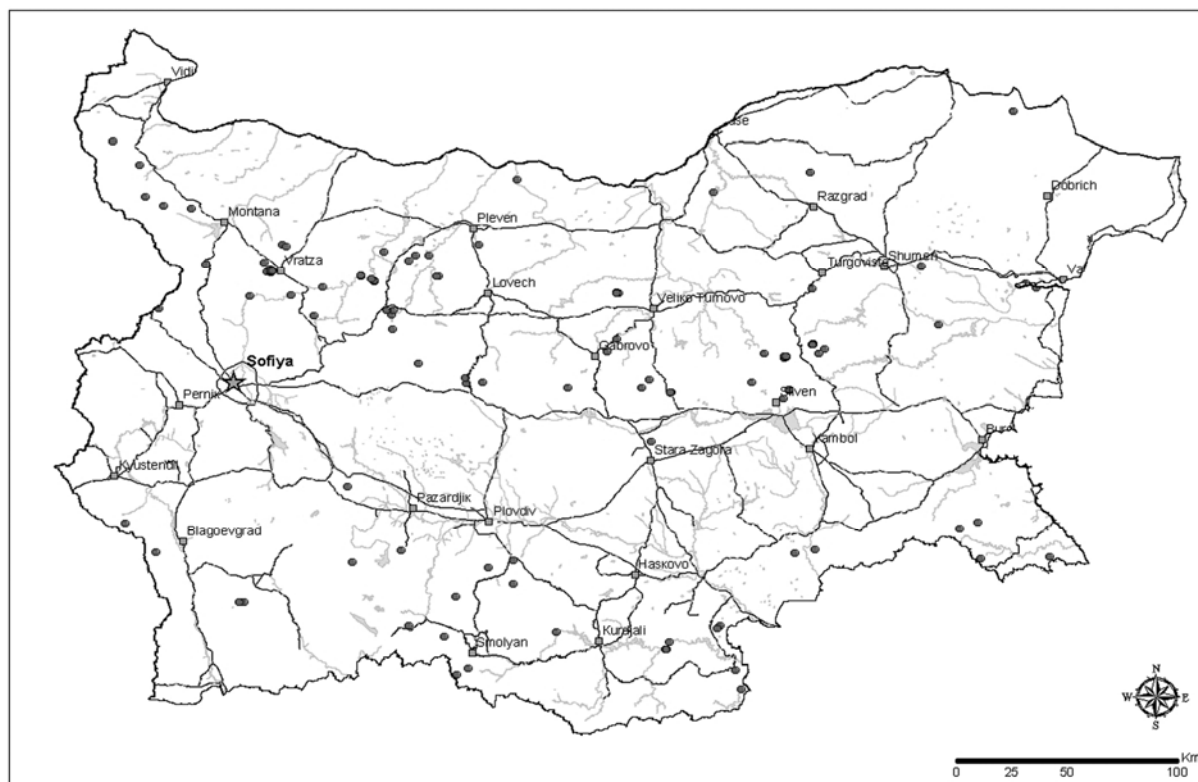


Fig.3 Map of the location of the caves in Bulgaria proclaimed as natural landmarks under I.Alexiev, A.Zhalov, K.Danailov et.al

4. Conclusion

Future trends for work in protection: the specialists in karst research – geographers, geologists, zoologists, archaeologists, speleologists, etc. should unite their efforts in declaring new karst regions for protected areas. Here is the place of systematic and coordinated educational policy of all state and public organizations in direction of karst protection as an important part of our natural and cultural national and world heritage!

There is no doubt that the most effective means for protection is the education of every member of the speleological communities (clubs, societies, national federations and associations) with accent to the young generation – our future – in exploration and karst protection, in sharing the joy of visiting these unique natural and cultural sites in the coming days! For the speleological society is much more important to work (by using all possible means in organizing special campaigns in schools, media, etc.) for educating and popularizing of the importance of the caves and karst as a part of the cultural heritage. In this way could be achieved the forming of a proactive attitude of the society in general on the problems of karst protection.

It is necessary to look for European dimensions in law basis for protection of caves, and the present forum seems to be appropriate for discussion on the topic. The point of view of the Bulgarian Federation of Speleology is that the European Federation could initiate and work over a project

of a Directive of the Council of Europe (EC) for protection of caves in general and in particular – for their protection as cultural monuments. Or at least, these problems could be regulated in the European Union countries through a Recommendation of the EC after the example of the Recommendation No 36/1992 on the Conservation of Underground Habitats of EC JUBERTHIE (1995).

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